# LOUISIANA Conservationist

November/December 2000
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## Big Bucks:
### The Annual Antler Cycle

## Reviving Louisiana's Bald Eagle Population

*Dedicated to the conservation and restoration of Louisiana's natural resources.*
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# Comments

By James Jenkins Jr., Secretary

Here we are at the end of the year 2000. This time last year the world was worried about Y2K compatibility. Large corporations and government agencies worldwide were laying plans for the worst possible computer scenarios. Wildlife and Fisheries was looking ahead too, at a potentially grim future. Most of the year has come and gone and we see that the majority of our concerns worked out for the best. The world did not come to a screeching halt on New Year's Eve at the stroke of midnight. Large corporations and government agencies did not close down, but returned to work without missing a beat. Most importantly, Wildlife and Fisheries found a way to stay alive without losing hundreds of employees and canceling many valuable services.

I don't want to get into a long explanation about the recent license increase, but I do want to say that without this fee increase our agency and the user groups in this state would have suffered substantially from the lack of the services they have come to expect, but would have been discontinued. It allowed many well qualified employees to keep their jobs, as well as allowed our refuges, WMAs, fish hatcheries, and regional offices to remain open. It kept our enforcement agents in the field, protecting our fish and game, instead of in the unemployment lines. These reasons alone make the time spent and efforts put forth in adjusting fees this past year more than worthwhile. Yes, we still have some areas to work on, but like previous challenges, the knowledge we have acquired working with our constituents and legislators, gives us confidence that it will again work out for the best.

When you finally stop to read this issue of the Louisiana Conservationist, Thanksgiving and Christmas will be here. The holidays have a way of making us reflect on the past, while pointing out the invaluable moment at hand. The features chosen for this issue have the same effect; they reflect on the past as well as recent accomplishments. A recap of the Bald Eagle survey highlights the details of a declining species and the return of this majestic bird to our state. Other stories covering antler growth of the white-tail deer, Louisiana's massive waterfowl migration and the bountiful fish catches, point out today's excellent hunting and fishing opportunities. These stories and the rest of the issue accent the valuable resources in Louisiana and the need to keep our momentum meeting the challenges of managing these resources that benefit so many of our citizens.

Here we are at the end of the year 2000 and the new year looks promising this time. Wildlife and Fisheries had a busy, complicated past year implementing and moving forward with changes essential for preserving our natural resources. During the coming holidays thousands of Louisianians will share these resources with families and friends while enjoying the vast outdoor activities and natural gifts this state has to offer. In my opinion, these are some of the best gifts we can receive for the holidays.

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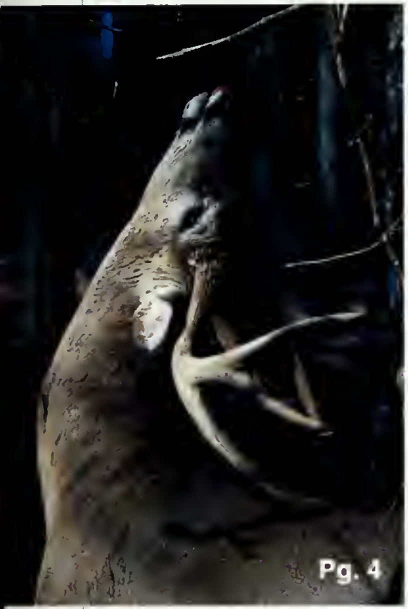

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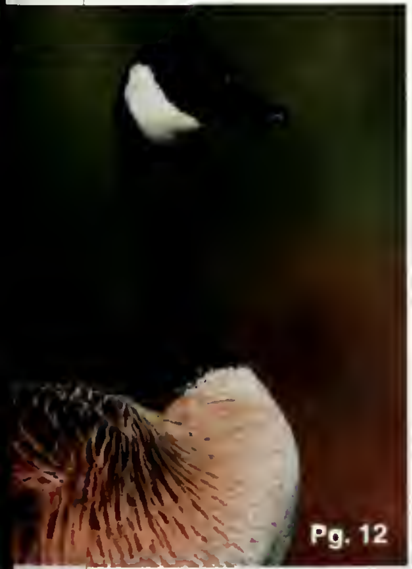

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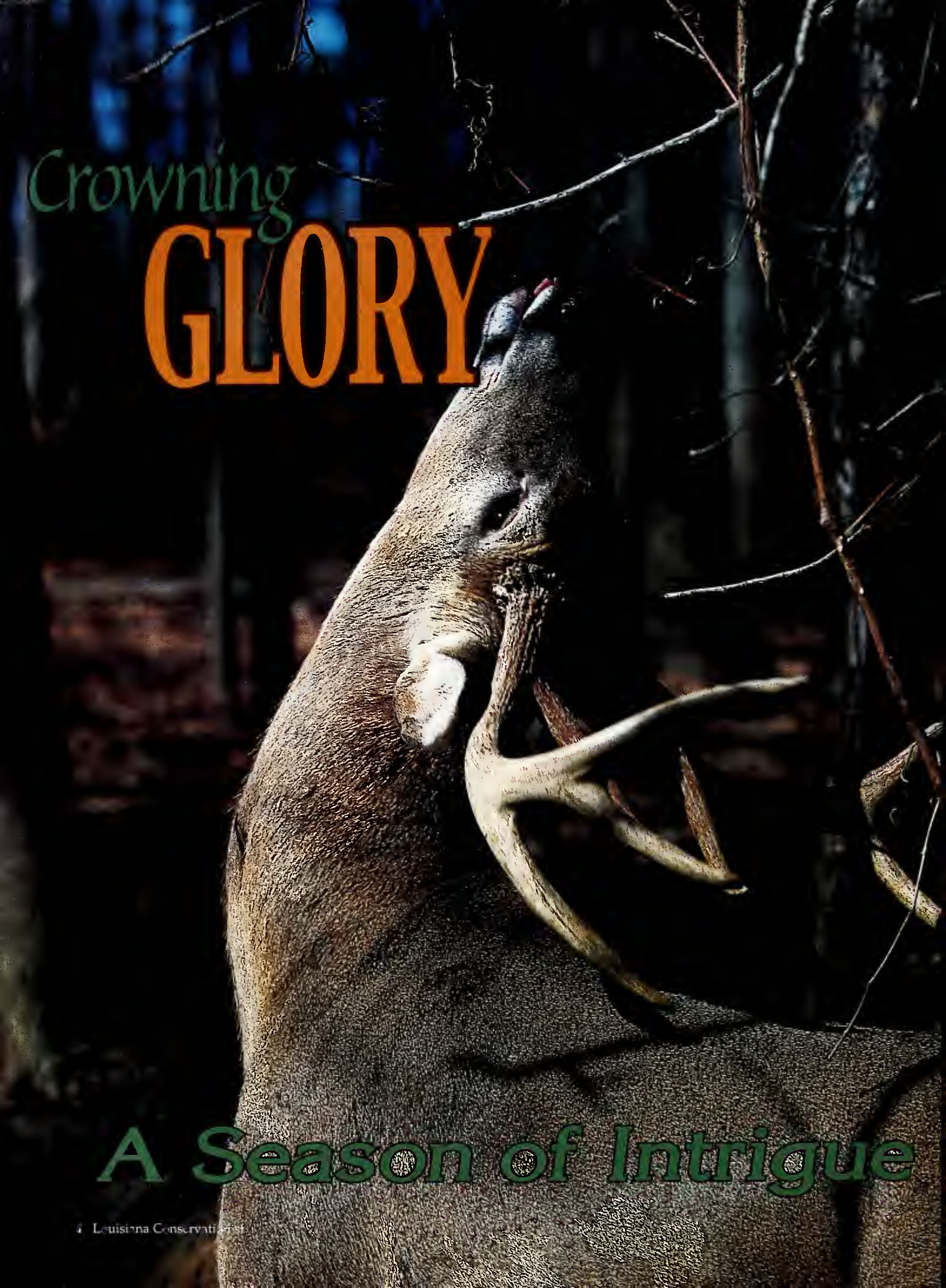


# Crowning GLORY

## A Season of Intrigue

### STORY BY
### DAVID MORELAND

In the deciduous forests of Louisiana a fascinating change takes place each fall: the leaves of the various woody trees, shrubs, and vines begin changing colors. Muscadine leaves turn pale yellow and green hickory leaves become a brilliant gold. Winged sumac, black gum and strawberry bush leaves turn bright red. The tulip-shaped leaves of the yellow poplar change from green to yellow, while the serrated leaves of sawtooth oaks become clay brown.

A season of change similar to that of the forest also occurs in white-tailed deer. In late summer or early fall, the brown velvet skin which covers the antlers begins to dry up and peel away from the hardened boney antler. The buck, with his crown of antlers, is now ready to participate in the breeding season which will last through the fall and early winter months. Once the rut is over and the testosterone level of the buck declines, the antlers will be shed, similar to a leaf breaking away from the woody stem. In a few months a new set of antlers begin budding out, and the cycle starts again. This cycle will recur annually until the buck dies.

Antlers are secondary sexual characteristics of male deer. They grow from the pedicel bones which develop on the skull of male fawns. The early development of these pedicels is very important because without them, the buck will not have antlers. The Deer Study Section receives periodic reports from hunters who have killed large bucks with "slick" heads. More than likely this condition is due to the pedicel bones not developing in the animals.

Fawns normally develop pedicels covered with skin and hair over the course of the fall and winter. This group of deer is referred to as "button" bucks. Fawns born in May and June in Areas two, three and 7 may develop some boney antler material.

Normally a buck begins growing his first antlers the spring following his birth. Studies have shown that yearling bucks (one-year-old deer) living on good habitat with a balanced population should produce branched antlers. Yearling bucks with spike antlers are generally produced on insufficient or over-populated habitat. Because body growth takes precedence over antler growth, if habitat nutrition is lacking the antlers of these young bucks will be small. This poor body growth will also have an affect on the buck in subsequent years, since antler size is also related to the deer's body size.

In general, the antlers of a buck grow larger each year if nutrition is adequate. In the wild, best antler growth occurs when the deer is between four and seven years old. In high-fenced areas where herds are supplementally fed year round, good antler growth may occur beyond that of deer living on native habitat.

It is also common for a deer to develop abnormal points as he grows older. A growing antler is subject to damage, and injuries to the developing antler often create non-typical points. Injuries can also result in the antler breaking off at the point of damage when it hardens.

The coloration of antlers is generally due to the bleeding that occurs as the velvet is shed. Some staining of the antler may occur from the bark of various tree species when the buck rubs its antlers on the tree. Aromatic trees such as sassafras, eastern red cedar and southern magnolia are favorite rubbing trees of deer.

The antler cycle is indeed fascinating. This regeneration of living tissue is unique in the animal kingdom. Many hunters often incorrectly refer to antlers as horns. They are entirely different. Horns are permanent and made of dead tissue; however, antlers are living tissue and grow into true bone, regenerated annually.

Antlers intrigued not only early man, but also today's deer hunter. Most hunters dream of shooting that once-in-a-lifetime buck with really large antlers. It goes to show that in an ever-changing world, some things just never change!

*David Moreland is the state Deer Study Leader. He is an official measurer for the Boone & Crockett Club, the Pope & Young Club and the Longhunter Society.*

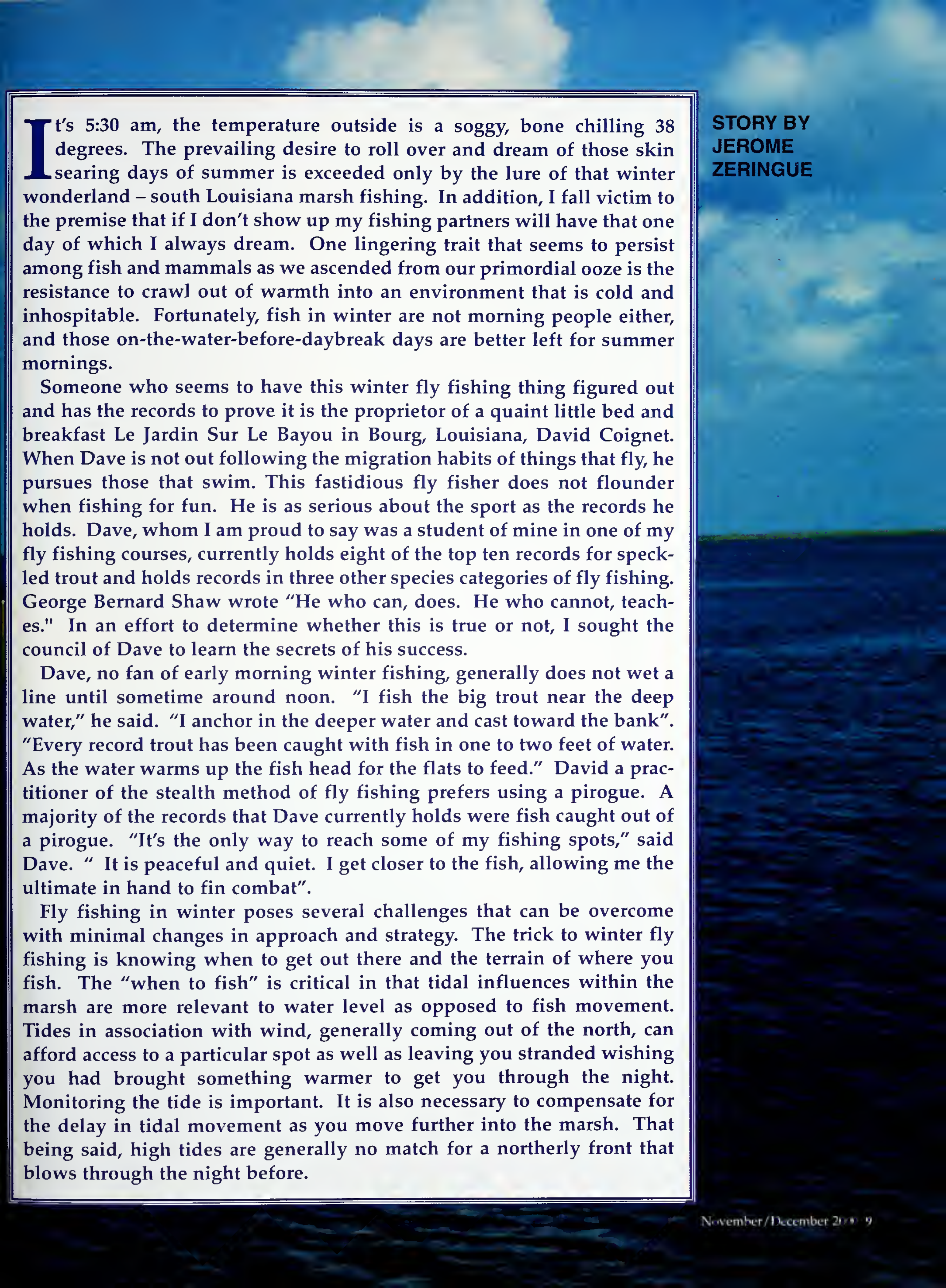
> "Antler development is affected greatly by diet and its general conformation is dictated by heredity."
>
> White-Tailed Deer Ecology and Management

In Louisiana fawns are usually born in Areas 2,3, and 7 in May and June and in Areas 1,4,5, and 6 between July and October. Spotted fawns develop pedicel bones on their skull on which antlers will grow. In late fall and winter fawns are commonly called "nubby" bucks since the pedicel bones are usually prominent by then. These fawns should grow their first set of antlers at one year of age. As a buck gets older the antlers generally will increase in size each year if habitat nutrition is good and the deer herd is kept in balance with the habitat. Antlers can be easily damaged while the buck is in velvet. Abnormal or non-typical

points are common in older bucks, usually four years or older. New antlers generally bud out in the spring, late April or early May. Antler growth proceeds at a rapid pace during the months of June and July. By the end of August the antlers have stopped growing and the velvet will soon be shed. Although most deer have bony antlers by October 1, an occasional velvet buck is killed during the early bow season. In Areas 2,3, and 7, the antlers will begin being shed by the end of December. Deer in Areas 1,4,5, and 6 will cast their antlers during February and March.

*Photos by David Moreland*

# WINTER FISHING



STORY BY
JEROME
ZERINGUE

It's 5:30 am, the temperature outside is a soggy, bone chilling 38 degrees. The prevailing desire to roll over and dream of those skin searing days of summer is exceeded only by the lure of that winter wonderland – south Louisiana marsh fishing. In addition, I fall victim to the premise that if I don't show up my fishing partners will have that one day of which I always dream. One lingering trait that seems to persist among fish and mammals as we ascended from our primordial ooze is the resistance to crawl out of warmth into an environment that is cold and inhospitable. Fortunately, fish in winter are not morning people either, and those on-the-water-before-daybreak days are better left for summer mornings.

Someone who seems to have this winter fly fishing thing figured out and has the records to prove it is the proprietor of a quaint little bed and breakfast Le Jardin Sur Le Bayou in Bourg, Louisiana, David Coignet. When Dave is not out following the migration habits of things that fly, he pursues those that swim. This fastidious fly fisher does not flounder when fishing for fun. He is as serious about the sport as the records he holds. Dave, whom I am proud to say was a student of mine in one of my fly fishing courses, currently holds eight of the top ten records for speckled trout and holds records in three other species categories of fly fishing. George Bernard Shaw wrote "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches." In an effort to determine whether this is true or not, I sought the council of Dave to learn the secrets of his success.

Dave, no fan of early morning winter fishing, generally does not wet a line until sometime around noon. "I fish the big trout near the deep water," he said. "I anchor in the deeper water and cast toward the bank". "Every record trout has been caught with fish in one to two feet of water. As the water warms up the fish head for the flats to feed." David a practitioner of the stealth method of fly fishing prefers using a pirogue. A majority of the records that Dave currently holds were fish caught out of a pirogue. "It's the only way to reach some of my fishing spots," said Dave. " It is peaceful and quiet. I get closer to the fish, allowing me the ultimate in hand to fin combat".

Fly fishing in winter poses several challenges that can be overcome with minimal changes in approach and strategy. The trick to winter fly fishing is knowing when to get out there and the terrain of where you fish. The "when to fish" is critical in that tidal influences within the marsh are more relevant to water level as opposed to fish movement. Tides in association with wind, generally coming out of the north, can afford access to a particular spot as well as leaving you stranded wishing you had brought something warmer to get you through the night. Monitoring the tide is important. It is also necessary to compensate for the delay in tidal movement as you move further into the marsh. That being said, high tides are generally no match for a northerly front that blows through the night before.

When discussing fly fishing with someone new to the sport the conversation generally turns to lures or in fly fishing jargon "flies." Inevitably, they will ask, "Do you get tired of fishing only top water?" On the other hand, "In winter don't most of the fish hang near the bottom and you miss out on many fish by fishing only top water?" Describing fly fishing as only top water fishing is too simplistic. There is so much more.

Redfish will generally hit anything that happens to venture within its strike zone, typically bait fish, shrimp or crab. Speckled trout feed ordinarily on the same bill of fare concentrating more on bait fish and shrimp. Redfish have very distinguishable seasonal variations in food habits as indicated by several studies regarding stomach content analysis. In winter, redfish will predominately feed on fish. During warmer months, crustaceans make up a greater proportion of their diet. Your fly box should contain an adequate representation of these food items. The operative word is representation. Having studied fish and their food habits for many years, it defies my comprehension why some of these concoctions get fish to strike. Fortunately, fly tiers are an inventive lot — most of whom revel in their ability to affix the most obscure item at a craft store or something the cat coughed up onto a hook with the notion of enticing fish to strike. Granted, most of the fish we pursue in the bayous and marshes of south Louisiana are not very selective, although there are times when, short of foul hooking them, you get skunked.

Flies used during the fall and winter should follow the "deep and creep" method. These are generally heavily weighted flies that are capable of reaching deeper water. Unless your stocking cap is lead lined, be sure to adjust your casting stroke to compensate for the heavier fly. Tear production after a late-night viewing of Brian's Song is minimal compared to the chance meeting of a weighted fly on an exposed ear on a cold morning. For that particular reason, Dave prefers using a slightly weighted line rather than weighted flies. "Typically I only use a shrimp or baitfish imitation with beadchain eyes, they tend not to hurt as much," said Dave.

Using a type of sinking line is also a very effective method of reaching fish holding in deeper water. Sinking lines, as the name implies, sink after they hit the water. These lines are especially useful for fishing deep holes and strong currents. The better quality fly line manufactures put a Roman numeral after the S to indicate how fast a line sinks in inches per second. For example "S II" means the line sinks about two inches per second. Full sinking lines are a bit harder to cast and control. Intermediate sinking lines are slightly denser than water, which allows them to sink slowly and maintain a depth around the first two to four feet of the water column. According to Dave, intermediate sinking lines are the way to fish in the marsh. "I use an intermediate line so I can keep my slightly weighted fly just below the surface." Floating/sinking lines also known as sink tip lines combine the elements of both floating and sinking lines. Sink tips vary in length from five to 30 feet depending on how deep you want to fish. The sinking section gets your fly down, while the floating sections allows for greater control and easier casting. Whichever you choose to increase hook-ups when the temperature drops so should your fly.

I enjoy my fishing trips with Dave and will continue to fish with him every chance I get. I will continue to teach. I may not catch record fish, but as expressed by Mr. Twain, "I've never let my school interfere with my education."

*Jerome "Zee" Zeringue is a fisheries biologist with a master's degree in Fisheries Science from LSU and a Federation of Fly Fishers Certified Casting instructor. He is the executive director of the Terrebonne Levee District.*

"Fly fishing in winter poses several challenges that can be overcome with minimal changes in approach and strategy. The trick to winter fly fishing is know when to get out there and the terrain of where you fish."

Photos by Pete Cooper, Jr.

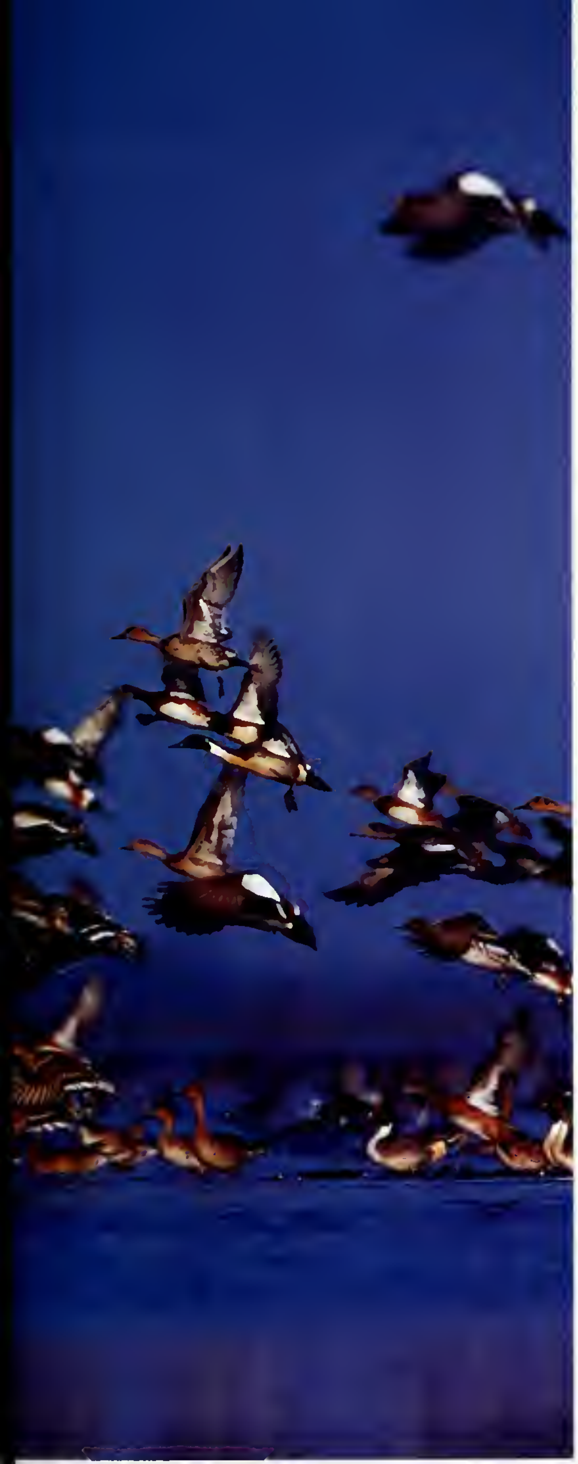
# Migratory Waterfowl

## How do they fl

**STORY BY**
**ROBERT HELM**

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY**
**JOE MAC**
**HUDSPETH, JR.**

Did you ever wonder how the poule d'eau (coot to the rest of the world) from the southern prairies of Canada ever got to the marsh in Louisiana last winter? He looks so weak and awkward in those short flights when you goose him with the pirogue. He certainly could not have flown 2000 miles by himself. While technically not a species of waterfowl,



# so far?

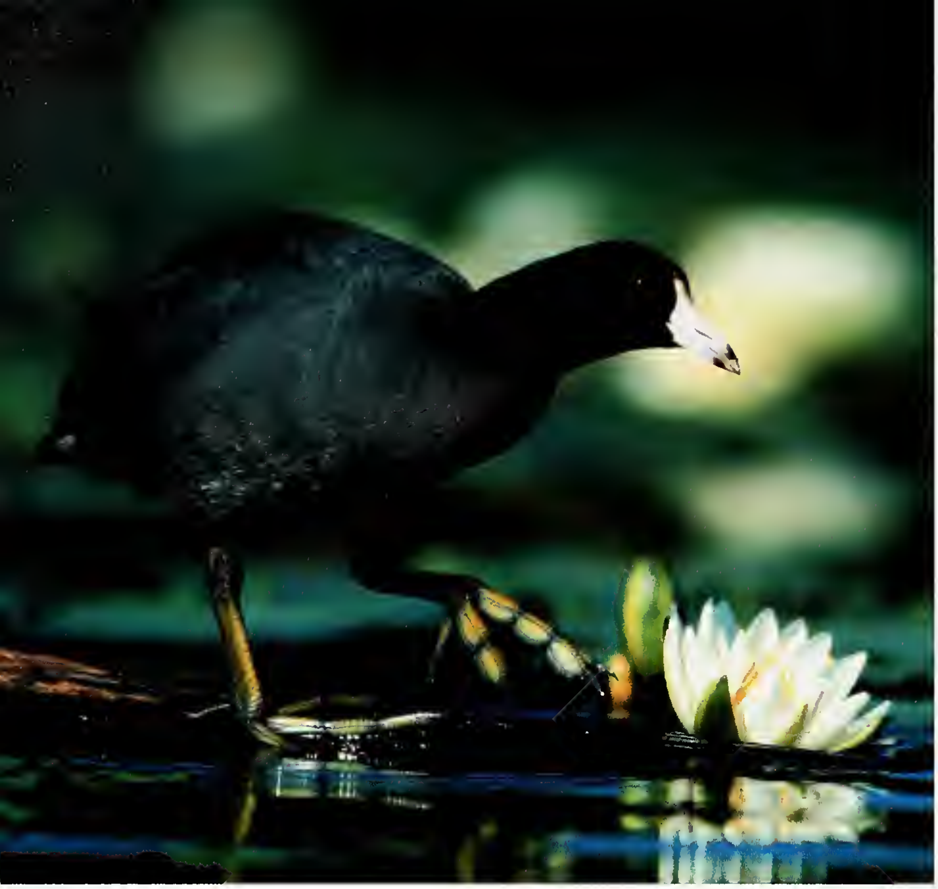
how and why do these coots and true waterfowl (ducks and geese ) migrate south and why do they come to Louisiana in such impressive numbers?

The annual movement of waterfowl between breeding and wintering areas and their spring return is one of natures most spectacular sights. It is a sign of the changing seasons. For me it is the first sighting of blue-wings in August or September, flying low and fast over the marsh that lets me know the migration has begun. For others it is that first distant but distinct call of specklebellies or snow geese in early fall flying over head in the darkness of the night. Magic is in the air.

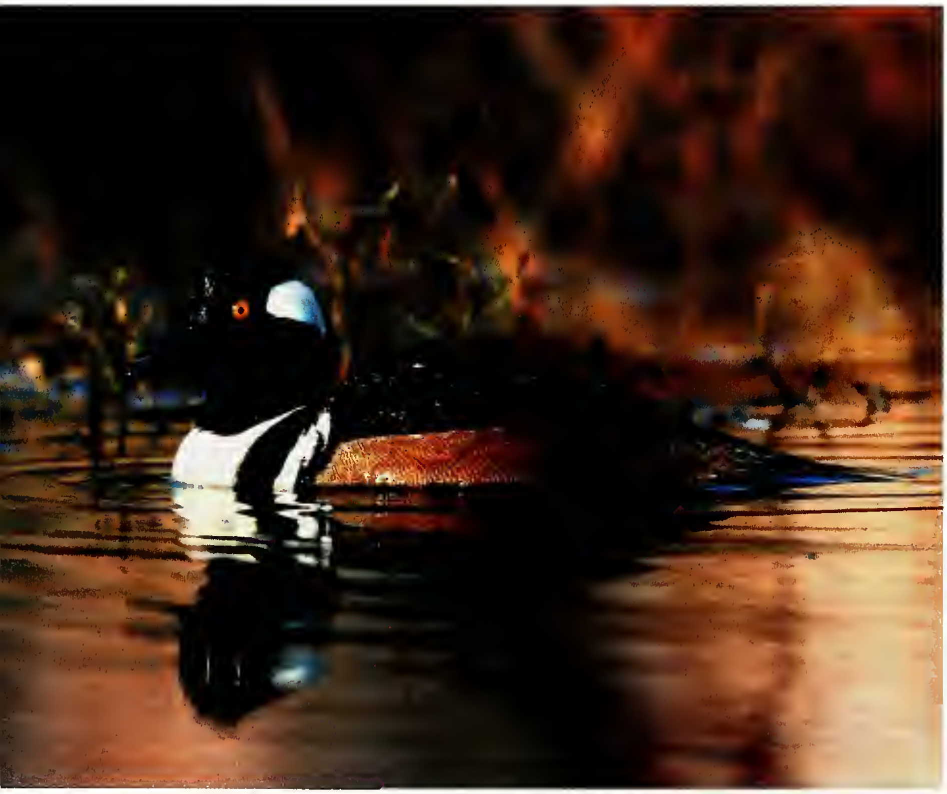
Waterfowl are forced to migrate south each fall because of harsh winter conditions that prevail on their breeding areas in the northern U.S. and Canada. Wetlands in northern breeding areas freeze and food sources on which birds depend become unavailable. Conversely there is inadequate nesting habitat in southern wintering areas to accommodate North America's waterfowl during the breeding season.

The shortened photo-period in the fall is the primary factor that keys migration. Advancing winter weather, reduced food resources and physiological conditions within waterfowl all contribute to the timing of migration. Blue-winged teal are our earliest migrants followed by pintails, shovelers, wigeon, gadwall and green-winged teal. Significant numbers of these early migrants are usually apparent in coastal marshes by late October and early November. The mallard has the most prolonged winter migration period and along with diving duck which migrates later.

Weather patterns in Louisiana and across the country have profound effects on waterfowl migration timing. During a fall season with mild weather patterns, waterfowl trickle south in small degrees over a long time period. There is usually at least one major migration flight each winter that is greater in scope and magnitude than others. Occasionally, large numbers leave the breeding grounds in mass to migrate almost nonstop to southern sites. These grand passages from the north are initiated by strong northerly winds, snow and falling temperatures. The most recent such event was in November 1995, when the sudden migration of millions of ducks and geese caused radar systems at seven major airports in the Midwest to close. Air traffic controllers were unable to distinguish between the large concentrations of migrating waterfowl and



The American coot (above) is not a true waterfowl. Nevertheless *poule d'eau*, as coots are known in south Louisiana, are fair game during waterfowl season. The hooded merganser (below) is also known as the "saw-bill" or "*bec-scie*" because of saw-like serrations around the edge of its bill.



approaching aircraft. Many of those birds ended up in our state's wetlands.

Waterfowl flyways is a term most of us are more familiar with, but flyways fail to define the passage of waterfowl because they cover too broad of an area. The four flyways of North America (Louisiana is in the Mississippi Flyway) are practical political units that group together states with common borders and similar waterfowl management issues. Dr. Frank Bellrose studied waterfowl in the Mississippi Flyway for more than 30 years and found that many ducks make the 1,500 to 2,000 mile trip from the prairie potholes in Canada to Louisiana in just two days, some of them without stopping. Ducks average a speed of 50 mph during migration and fly at altitudes between 1,500 and 3,000 feet during the day, down to a minimum of 500 feet at night. Usually the longer the distance of migration the higher altitude was taken. Geese migrate at higher altitudes and have been observed up to 20,000 feet.

Dr. Bellrose discovered that waterfowl follow distinct migration corridors or migratory routes between breeding and wintering areas that are primarily north and south oriented. With the use of radar surveillance and many years of band information, he found most waterfowl migrate at night and that migration routes are less than 10 miles wide. These routes are most apparent along large river valleys, coastlines and other major landscape features. The primary routes in Louisiana are associated with the Mississippi, Red and Atchafalaya rivers and where secondary river systems merge, such as the Ouachita and Boeuf rivers.

Waterfowl have well designed navigational abilities that allow them to return to the same wintering and nesting sites year after year. Mallards commonly nest near the same pothole from which it hatched and wood duck hens often use the same nesting box for many years. They apparently use major landscape features such as rivers, celestial cues like the position of the sun, moon and stars, and the earth's magnetic field for navigation. While some of the secrets of waterfowl navigational abilities remain unclear, what is certain is that many of North America's ducks and goose winter destinations are in Louisiana.

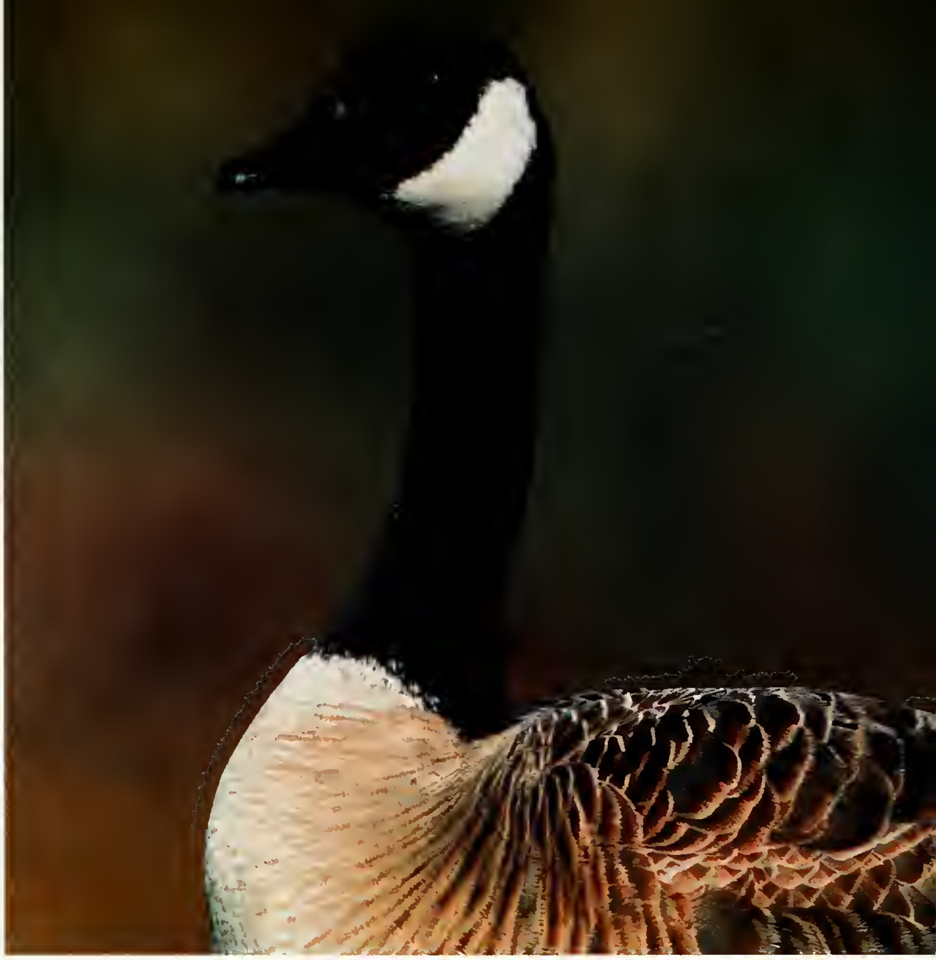
Louisiana is positioned at the extreme southern end of the Mississippi Flyway with wintering populations of ducks that approach five million and goose numbers that have exceeded one million. Louisiana winters many waterfowl that also originate in the Central Flyway to our west. It becomes the wintering location of many birds that do not cross the Gulf to the tropics of Latin America. Our coast also serves as a migratory stop over site for many ducks on their way to South and Central America. Louisiana supports more wintering waterfowl that any other state in the country and the reason is simple: abundance of wetlands.

The four million acres of coastal marshes are our most important wetland habitat for waterfowl, extending along the entire Gulf coast from Texas to Mississippi. These marshes represent 40 percent of the coastal marshes in the lower 48 states. It is difficult to appreciate how vast our coastal zone without looking at it from a duck's point of view —from an airplane. Combine these wetlands with fertile soils, semitropical weather with a 300 day growing season and 60 inches of annual rainfall and you end up with a duck Mecca! In addition to coastal marshes, 600,000 acres of rice are planted in Louisiana, 80 percent in southwest parishes that border the northern edge of freshwater marshes. The combination of shallow flooded rice fields and marshes makes this area the most important section of the state for waterfowl.

Ricelands and other flooded agriculture fields in central and northeast Louisiana. Also provide an abundance of wetland habitat Catahoula Lake (30,000 acres) is the key to waterfowl abundance in central Louisiana with peak counts of 500,000 ducks annually. Also more than nine million acres of forested wetlands occur in Louisiana which are comprised of hardwood species. Many of these areas have backwater lakes along flood plains of the major rivers like the Mississippi, Red, and Atchafalaya and are very important for ducks.

Now, back to that poule d'eau. I still can not believe he navigated those many miles by itself. He must have taken a train or maybe it was a plane?

*Robert Helm is the Waterfowl Study Leader for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.*



Canada geese (above) are among the most strikingly beautiful of all waterfowl. Their distinctive dark head and light underbody make them more elusive to predators. Colorful plumage gives the purple gallinule (below) its name. A relative of the American coot, this brightly-feathered bird fits in well in its winter home — the tropics.

# Louisiana's BALD EAGLE Program

Photo by Lynn Stone

## A National Symbol Gets Local Attention

**STORY BY THOMAS HESS JR.**

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is the second largest bird of prey in North America and was a common south Louisiana resident during the early 1900s. Bald eagle numbers declined throughout the twentieth century and by 1972 only six or seven active nesting territories were reported in Louisiana. The major factor contributing to the decline of the bald eagle population was the use of DDT from the 1950s through the 1970s. DDT altered the birds' calcium production, resulting in eggs with thin shells that broke under the weight of incubating birds. As a result of these findings, the use of DDT was banned in the United States in 1972.

In the early 1970s U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologist Ray Aycock began conducting aerial bald eagle nest surveys. Ray was aided by noted eagle expert Wayne Dubuc, a private citizen with an acute interest in bald eagles. In 1984 the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) began its own formal bald eagle surveys with fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. Dubuc helped the Department establish the surveys and continues to participate in the program today.

**Present 2000**

Since the movement to re-establish the bald eagle Louisiana has seen a dramatic increase in active nesting territories. An active nesting territory is defined as an area of one or more nests used by a pair of eagles. Since the beginning of the LDWF's surveys, nesting territories have increased from 18 in 1984 to 151 in 2000. This represents 1,632 young eagles fledged from eagle nests since 1984.

The annual aerial bald eagle survey begins in late January after the leaves have fallen from nest trees. This year, however, mild winter weather caused foliage to remain on nest trees making the survey difficult. Nest activity began in December and peaked in January due to the unseasonably warm winter with 69 percent (89) of successful nests fledged by the end of March, 29.5 percent (38) by the end of April and 1.5 percent (2) by the end of May. The final survey was conducted on May 15, 2000 with 151 active nests producing 213 young birds. Each nest is visited at least twice: the first visit in January reveals adults present at the nest; the second visit in the spring documents the young produced. Young birds must be at least eight weeks old to be counted in the production survey because birds eight weeks old generally survive to the 12 week old flight age.

Although most nests in Louisiana are found from New Iberia to the Mississippi state line along the marsh/swamp interface where cypress trees and marsh grasses integrate, other nests also occur throughout the state. They are usually found in tall dominant trees towering above the surrounding forest or swamp, with bald cypress as the preferred tree, but live oak and pine trees are used as well. Nests can be six to eight feet in diameter, constructed of sticks and are used year after year. One nest at White Kitchen, Louisiana has been used for more than 20 years.

### The Survey

It takes 40 hours of flight time to survey nests. A Bell Jet Ranger 206B helicopter is used to survey nests in Louisiana's coastal zone. Loran C navigation equipment was used to map and locate nests in the 1980s and early 1990s, but in 1992 the Department began using Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment. This change in equipment aided in producing precise latitude and longitude coordinates and greatly facilitated nest visitation. Outside the coastal zone nests are surveyed with a Cessna 210 airplane or Cessna 185 floatplane and as a general rule less than 10 nests are surveyed using fixed wing aircraft.

Survey data is compiled by Department biologists and distributed to state and federal agencies, which in turn use the information to regulate development around Bald Eagle nests. Agencies follow parameters set forth in Management Guidelines for the Bald Eagle in the Southeast Region. Agencies work to minimize impacts associated with development and assist developers with viable "work-around" strategies when a project occurs in close proximity to a nest. Human activities are regulated within a 1,500 foot radius of nest trees from October 1 to May 15.

The bald eagle was "downlisted" from endangered to threatened in the contiguous 48 states on July 12, 1995. USFWS proposed to "delist" the Bald Eagle in July 2000, which would have removed it from the endangered species list. USFWS did not meet its anticipated goal due to the overflow of public comments on the proposed delisting rule. All comments have been and will continue to be evaluated and the Service is awaiting guidance from the Solicitor's Office on interpretation of regulations pertaining to bald eagle protection under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

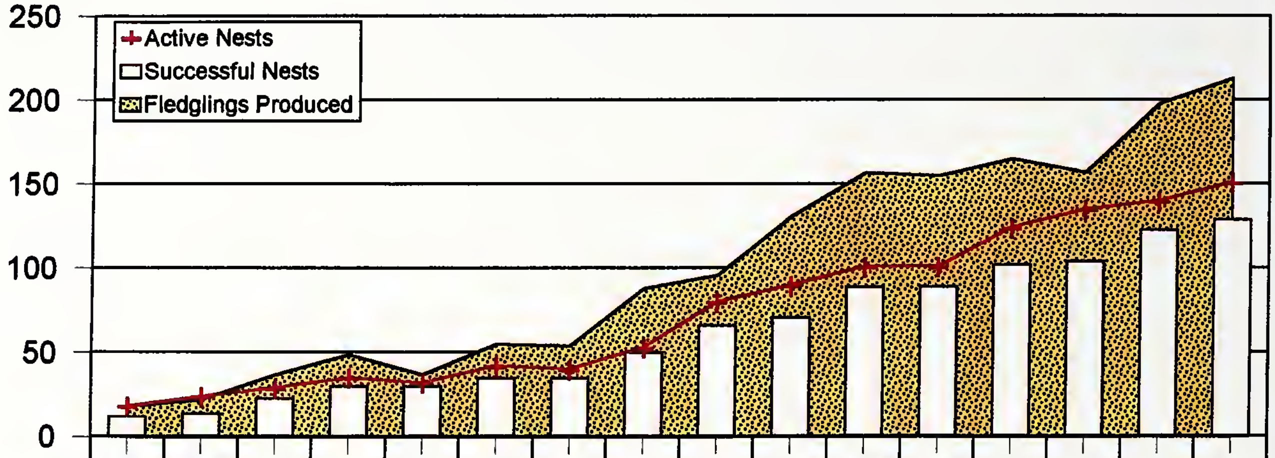
The recovery of the bald eagle in Louisiana has been tremendous. The rapid population expansion in recent years can be attributed to an overall improvement in Louisiana's environment, habitat protection and the public's increased environmental awareness.

*Thomas Hess Jr. is a biologist manager for the LDWF Fur and Refuge Division at Rockefeller Refuge. He has been in charge of the bald eagle program since 1992 and recently has taken over responsibility of the brown pelican program.*

**The mainstay of the bald eagle's diet is fish. Though ranchers sometimes blame them for taking livestock, it is more likely for eagles to scavenge carcasses killed by wolves or coyotes than take large mammals themselves.**

*Photo by Lynn Stone*

# LOUISIANA BALD EAGLE NESTING AND PRODUCTION, 1984-2000



| | 84-85 | 85-86 | 86-87 | 87-88 | 88-89 | 89-90 | 90-91 | 91-92 | 92-93 | 93-94 | 94-95 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 98-99 | 99-00 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Active Nests** | 18 | 24 | 29 | 35 | 32 | 42 | 40 | 53 | 80 | 90 | 101 | 101 | 124 | 135 | 140 | 161 |
| **Successful Nests** | 12 | 14 | 23 | 30 | 30 | 35 | 35 | 50 | 66 | 71 | 89 | 89 | 102 | 104 | 123 | 129 |
| **Fledglings Produced** | 18 | 22 | 37 | 49 | 37 | 55 | 54 | 88 | 96 | 131 | 157 | 155 | 165 | 157 | 198 | 213 |

Eagle nests are known as aeries and can be very large. Some are as wide as five feet across and weigh up to two tons.

*Photo by Thomas Hess Jr.*

Young eaglets spend up to three months in the nest before taking flight. Adult plumage replaces the spotted juvenile plumage shown below after four or five years.

*Photo by Lynn Stone*

# well DONE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JANICE COLLINS

Prepared properly, wild venison is a delicious and appealing holiday dish. And with a higher calcium, phosphorus and iron content, less fat and fewer calories than beef or pork, you can't enjoy a meat that is better for you.

Yet too often when venison dishes reach the table, the words gamy, tough, strong and wild-tasting come to mind.

Chef Phillipe Parola, an avid hunter and President/CEO of the LA Culinary & Hotellerie Institute, revealed several basic reasons for less than satisfactory results while preparing venison during a recent cooking demonstration. Preparing a variety of gourmet quality venison recipes at the home of Brent and Jennifer Boxill in Baton Rouge, Chef Parola's goal was to convince several less than enthusiastic dinner guests of the culinary enjoyment to be found in venison dishes. During the evening he also shared useful advice and methods on the preparation and cooking of venison.

"There are many methods of cooking venison and each depends on the particular cut of venison. To get the best possible flavor depends on the manner in which it is cooked," explained Chef Parola. "Cooks must realize that cooking techniques that are appropriate for certain cuts of venison will almost never be applied to others."

According to Parola, cooks must first understand the fundamental similarities and differences of venison and beef. Venison and beef are both dark red meat of large grazing animals. The cuts of both animals are similar.

However beef is marbled by fat throughout the meat and the fat of venison is found only outside of the meat. To avoid the gamy flavor, venison fat should be trimmed from all cuts. He recommends trimming all fat and the thick connective tissue called silver skin.

Uncooked venison has less moisture than beef. Lacking fat, venison tends to have a more intense and pungent flavor, while beef has a mild, savory taste.

"The bitter taste often associated with venison is the result of overcooking," said Parola. Tender cuts from the deer's loin (T-bone, ribeye, sirloin or porterhouse) or rump roasts should be cooked quickly on high heat using heavy pans to retain the juices which saves the flavor. As a general rule, he sug-

**Chef Parola receives a favorable response to his presentation of *Venison with Blackberry Glaze* (shown below) from his hostess Jennifer Boxill.**

gests cooking the tender cuts medium rare.

Less tender cuts (shoulder, neck, breast, rump, round, shank and flank) should be cooked slowly with moist heat. These tough cuts generally require two hours or more at a low temperature in liquid. Overcooking can make the meat bitter in which case you can add vinegar, wine, apple juice, tomatoes or onions. He also recommended using these cuts for venison sausage and stews.

When using frozen venison, allow the meat one to two days to defrost in the refrigerator. The chef cautioned against rushing the process by water or microwave because the external parts of the meat may warm up and become vulnerable to bacteria long before the inside defrosts. He also suggested marinating these cuts in red wine or vinegar to tenderize or soaking in milk to takeaway the gamy taste.

By following these basic guidelines, even novice cooks can prepare tender and juicy venison dishes no matter what cut is used.

At the end of the evening, after serving *Venison with Blackberry Glaze* and backstrap medallions medium rare, even the chef's most reluctant dinner guest agreed—the venison was "well done."

*For more information contact Chef Parola toll free at 800/806-CHEF or log on at* ***chef-parola.com.***

## Venison With Blackberry Glaze

18 medallions (3 per serving)
2 Tbs. black berry jelly
2 oz. butter
1/2 cup red wine
Tony's seasoning to taste

In a saute skillet brown the butter, then saute the venison medallions seasoned with Tony's seasoning. Remove venison and add red wine, reduce halfway. Add black berry jell, stir well until it becomes sauce. Top medallions with sauce. May be served with rice or mashed potatoes. Serves six

## Venison Roast

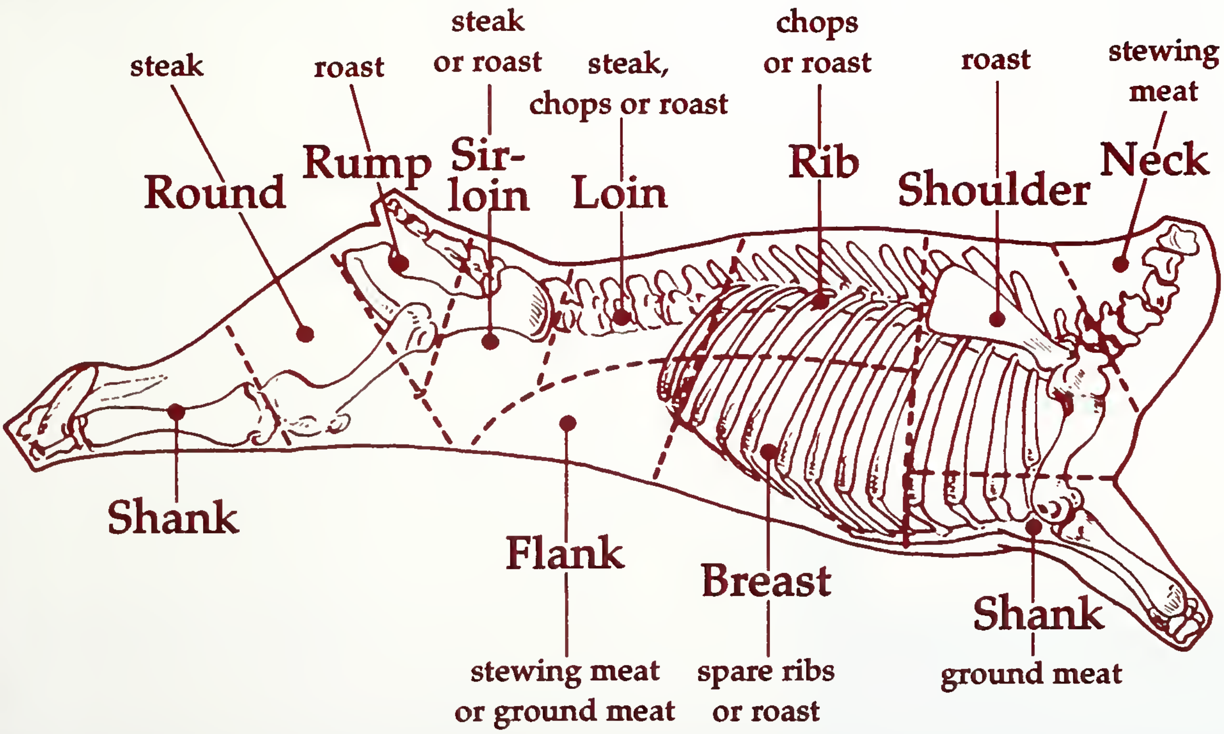
1 back strap with bones
1 diced carrot
3 garlic cloves
1 cup red wine
1/4 cup of olive oil
1 diced onion
1 diced celery branch
2 bayleaves
2 cups water
Tony's seasoning to taste

Place venison in a baking pan. Season with Tony's to taste. Add all of the diced vegetables, garlic and bayleaves. Add oil and bake in the oven at 375 degress for 25 minutes until golden brown. Add red wine and water, cover with aluminum foil and cook at 325 degrees for 35 minutes or until meat is well done. Serve with the juice. Serves six.

## BBQ Venison

12 venison chops
1/2 cup white wine
2 Tsp. chopped garlic
Tony's to taste
1 cup vegetable oil
4 Tsp. Dijon mustard or Grey Poupon
1/2 Tsp. Balsamic vinegar

In a bowl mix oil, white wine, mustard, garlic and vinegar. Season the venison chops with Tony's and marinate in oil mixture for one hour. Cook over medium high heat on BBQ pit until desired temperature.



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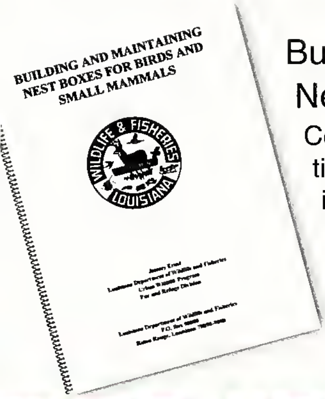
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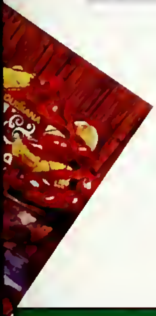

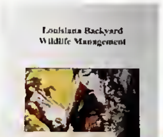

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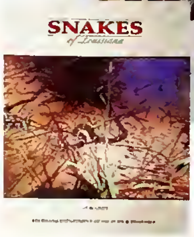

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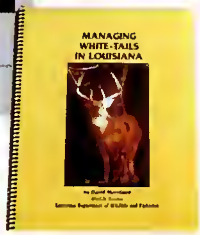

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Wildlife
MANAGEMENT AREA

# WEST BAY

West Bay WMA, one of the oldest wildlife management areas in Louisiana, is located in north-central Allen Parish, three miles west of Oakdale. The area is a cooperative partnership on 62,511 acres between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Boise Cascade Corporation and Louisiana Pacific Corporation. LDWF has leased the land from the private industries since 1948 at no cost and manages the wildlife resources on the area while providing the public with outdoor recreational opportunities. The primary use of the land by landowners is the production of pine timber.

The area, primarily flat with sloping hills, is interspersed with small creek bottoms and hardwood flat areas. The soil is mainly sandy and poor in nutrients. Large portions of the WMA have been converted from the once-dominant longleaf pine to slash pine plantations. The overstory of the woods is composed of longleaf, slash, loblolly and shortleaf pine and red, blackjack and post oak trees. Creek bottoms have an overstory composed of water, willow and white oak and beech, sweetgum and magnolia trees.

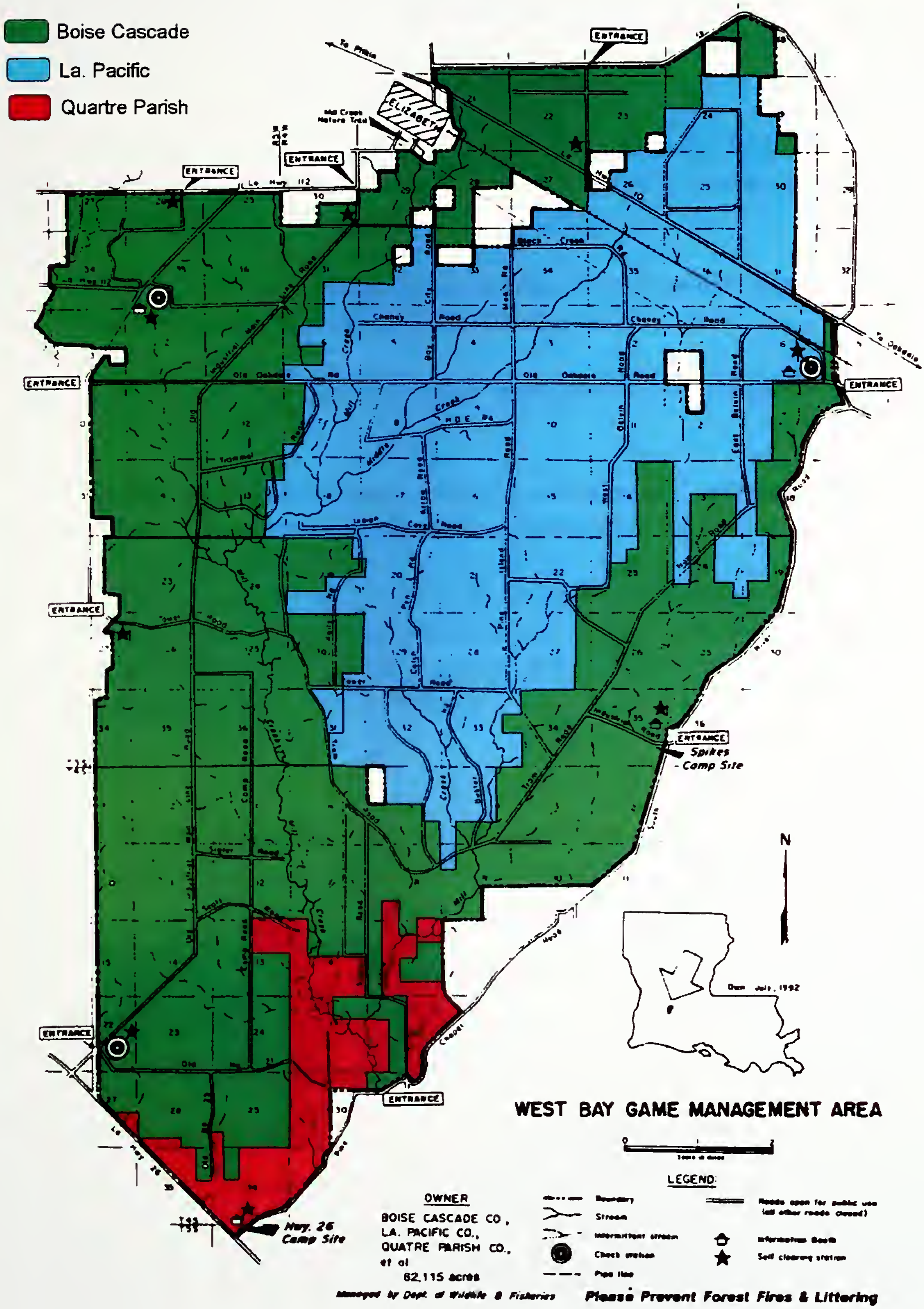
The understory plant growths on the sloping hills are very sparse and consist of wax myrtle, yaupon, dogwood and huckleberry. The understory in the creek bottoms varies from sparse to dense and is composed of red and white bay, red maple, blackgum, gallberry and sweetleaf trees. Other plant species include honeysuckle, green briars, blackberry, rattan and huckleberry.

Game species available for hunting include deer, squirrel, rabbit, turkey, quail, dove and woodcock. The WMA also supports furbearing animals such as raccoon, mink, bobcat and coyote and trapping is allowed. Sportsmen come from all over Louisiana to hunt on West Bay WMA, but Southwestern Louisianians utilize the area most.

Several species of unique plants and animals can be found in the wet bogs or hillside seep areas. About 20 acres of wildlife food plots are planted annually on West Bay. The plots are planted in the spring with brown top millet and in the winter with winter wheat. Allen Parish West Bay wma maintains a free ranging livestock ordinance which allows individuals the right to range cattle and hogs within the parish which limits the planting of food plots within the area.

Prescribed burning is performed on a fifth of the land annually. Controlled burning reduces the risks of forest fires and improves wildlife habitat by removing fuel accumulations and encouraging the growth of herbaceous vegetation of value to wildlife.

Access to West Bay WMA can be made by La. Hwy. 26 on the south boundary, La. Hwy. 10 from the north and by the Elizabeth Fire Tower Road from the east. There are numerous gravel roads crisscrossing the area which are maintained by the landowners. The boundary lines of West Bay are painted white and marked with LDWF West Bay WMA signs. There are no headquarters facilities on the area. West Bay has three primitive camping areas which are heavily used by the public in October and November.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Cheney Road
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Trammel
Lodge Cove Road
Spikes Camp Site
Hwy. 26 Camp Site
N
Drn July, 1992
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1
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Stream
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## Species Profile

# Purple Gallinule

The purple gallinule (*Porphyrula martinica*) or swamp hen, is a migratory member of the rail family that nests in the southern U.S. and winters primarily in the tropics. The large, brightly colored species is very dependent on freshwater wetlands with rich plant diversity. The purple gallinule is often confused with the common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*).

The purple gallinule is considered to be one of the most handsome of all water birds. The head, neck and underparts of the adult bird are a deep rich purple, while the back is dark green. The bill is bright red with a yellow tip and a light blue frontal shield and like all members of the rail family, the bright yellow-green feet are lobed rather than webbed. The lobes flare out on the back stroke, providing propulsion. Plumage characteristics are similar between sexes, but differences in body weight and length of the middle toe and tarsus have been recorded.

The social structure of purple gallinules in North America consists of a breeding pair and their young, which is maintained through the breeding season and prior to fall migration. During spring migration, the birds migrate across the Gulf of Mexico from the tropics of Central and South America to the southern North American coast into Georgia, Texas and Louisiana in mid April.

Though the age of initial breeding is unknown, purple gallinules probably begin to breed at one year of age. Courtship displays include billing, bowing, nibbling and swaying. Territorial displays for breeding spots may include charging, chasing and bowing.

Both sexes of the species share reproductive responsibilities from nest construction and incubation to rearing of the young. The nests are constructed from nearby plant materials and extensive walkways for nest access are constructed in emergent vegetation. The gallinules begin nesting in May and continue to lay eggs until early August. The female purple gallinule lays one egg per day with an incubation period of 18-20 days, which begins before the clutch is complete. Common clutch size has not been definitively ascertained: estimated average number of eggs in a nest is about six.

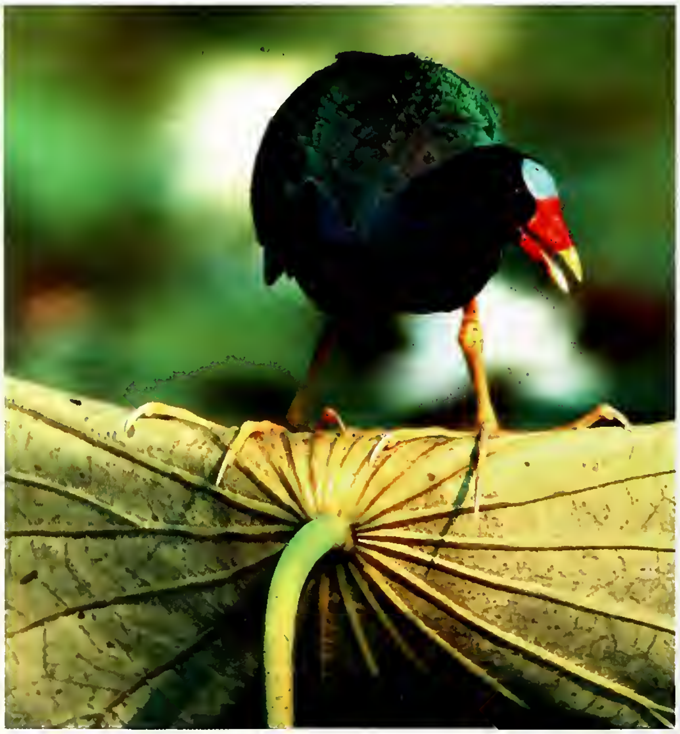

Photo by Joe Mac Hudspeth Jr.

Mollusks, crawfish, insects and their larvae are fed to the gallinule chicks for two to four days after they hatch and purple gallinules feed themselves by 21 days of age. The fledglings are generally capable of short flight at seven weeks.

Adult purple gallinules undergo a molt in late summer and are unable to fly for about four weeks until the flight feathers grow back. At time of molting, the plumage and bill becomes dull which makes it difficult to distinguish molting adults from fully-developed juveniles in the fall.

The species consumes a diet consisting mostly of annual grass and sedge seeds, floating and submergent vegetation seeds, water hyacinth flowers and domestic rice grains. Purple gallinules also make use of aquatic insects and their larvae including dragonflies for nourishment.

Deep water, fresh to brackish marshes, lakes and coastal impoundments with stable water levels and dense, varied vegetation provides the best habitat for the purple gallinules. Nests are built either on floating vegetative mats or in emergent vegetation such as cattail and cut grass. Purple gallinules seldom use open water areas which have no floating vegetation. Rice fields are also good nesting sites because they provide a dependable source of food, cover and water.

The number of gallinule hunters is small compared to the total number of small game and other-migratory bird hunters; the difficulty hunters have distinguishing between common moorhens and purple gallinules further complicates harvest estimates. Despite liberal hunting regulations recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, purple gallinule harvest is probably low due to low hunter interest and the secretive nature of the species. Harvest will probably remain low because most of the birds migrate south prior to the late fall hunting seasons in many states.

# LAW lines

### BY MAJ. KEITH LACAZE

## DEER DILEMMA

For the wildlife enforcement agent, the arrival of hunting season is always accompanied by a multitude of questions and intense discussions. What is legal and what isn't? Why can't I do this or that? Is this new thing legal? The list goes on.

Many current practices are debated as are new firearms, archery supplies and decoys. Of late one topic seems to be at the top of the heap of questionable hunting applications. It is the use of corn or other feeds for hunting deer.

The majority of hunters in Louisiana are aware that feeding deer (with the exception of sweet potatoes) and the hunting of deer over feed is legal on private land. It is not legal in Mississippi, and many people speculate on why it is permitted here and illegal there. In Louisiana debate over whether one should or should not bait deer rages on.

The practice is widespread and one would be hard pressed to find a deer lease where corn feeders are not the norm. Sales generated by the purchase of feeders and corn run to the millions of dollars. "Deer Corn For Sale" signs are a common sight and feed and seed store owners love to see guys in camo driving up.

Wildlife biologists advise against it for a number of reasons. Congregating deer at feeding sights increases the risk of spreading disease. The introduction of supplemental feed may artificially and temporarily increase the carrying capacity of the land. If the feeding discontinues at the end of hunting season, the deer lose a nutrition source they have become dependent upon at a time of year when it is most needed, late winter, post-rut. Turkeys visiting feeders may be affected. Corn containing naturally occurring toxins is another real and immediate threat to our greatest game bird. Raccoons, squirrels, feral hogs and other birds attracted to feeding sights, may also spread or contract disease and consume toxins.

Whether or not the practice is a threat to deer, feeding is rampant, popular and by all appearances, here to stay. Good or bad, feeding deer and hunting deer over feed has dramatically changed the sport. Standard practice for those hunting on private land is a food plot with corn feeder and a deer stand overlooking the lay out. Many hunters now hunt exclusively over the corn pile and would not even consider any other method. Some hunting leases have rules restricting hunting exclusively to food plots and feeder locations.

Many non-hunters are outraged upon hearing of the practice and perceive it as a deadly method of luring unsuspecting deer to their death at the hands of hunters. In truth, and quite frankly, if it was that effective, it would be illegal. As any deer hunter who has sat staring at a feeder for a few hours will tell you, it isn't all that great. Deer are extremely wary creatures and approach feed, and anything else, slowly and carefully. All the while they are at full alert for the slightest scent or sound hinting at the presence of man. When acorns and other desirable natural food sources are available, deer will abandon corn feeders entirely.

The most common occurrence at a corn feeder is the appearance of the local doe living nearest the feeder. She is usually accompanied by the previous year's and current offspring. It is highly unlikely a trophy buck will be lured to a corn feeder. With the exception of during the rut, they are simply too wary to come strolling up to such an obvious set up. True, there are exceptions and no doubt some nice bucks have been killed over corn. But as a general rule, don't look for "Ole Mossy Horns" by the corn bucket.

So why is the practice so popular? Probably for a number of reasons. The advent of leasing is one. Hunters paying lease fees tend to be protective and possessive of wildlife on leased land. They naturally want to maximize the number of deer on the land and keep them close. In the minds of many of these hunters, supplemental feeding is the way to go. We also tend to want to "care for" living things we feel are "ours." What is the first rule we are taught as children in caring for pets? Feed them.

Hunting deer over bait is widely accepted as the best way to start off new hunters. They know where to focus their attention while waiting for the deer to arrive and the possibilities of seeing deer are fairly good. The young or new hunter stands a good chance of harvesting a doe or young buck at a feeder. Elderly hunters can improve their odds or hunt more comfortably from a permanent set up.

Harvesting antlerless deer, a necessity for proper deer management, is usually accomplished quickly and more efficiently at a feeder. The hunter has time to carefully look over feeding deer and make the proper selection for harvest.

Whether hunting deer over bait will stand the test of time remains to be seen. It is doubtful any attempt will ever be made to pass laws making it illegal on private land. At this point it is so widespread and so many people have invested in feeders, such legislation would be vigorously opposed by the vast majority of hunters and business people who sell feeders and feed.

Critics say it eliminates fair chase and requires no particular skill or effort on the part of the hunter. Proponents are quick to respond it by no means guarantees success but makes things easier for novice hunters and guests who have no opportunity to scout and set up their own stand. Perhaps the worst consequence of hunting deer on corn is the loss of the traditional method of deer hunting and the required skills.

The ability to scout an area, looking for and recognizing deer sign, knowing where to look, how to hunt the wind, stand placement and other woodsman skills are not applied to this method of hunting. If it results in a generation of hunters who no longer have those skills, then that is perhaps the greatest harm in the corn feeder.

Like whiskey, when used in moderation, feeders are probably not all that bad. No one should confine their hunting methods exclusively to the feeder. Hunting in different locations and by different methods tends to keep us from becoming bored and frustrated. It also keeps our hunting skills sharp.

Those skills must be passed on to the next generation of hunters. The ethics of fair chase and the challenge of outwitting this most wary of game animals must be carried forward by future generations. When it is all said and done, let's hope our children and grandchildren will have acquired those ethics and skills. If they are to keep the grand tradition of hunting alive, they will need to be equipped with a lot more than a corn barrel.

# CONSERVATION notes

### TEXACO DONATES TO LDWF'S 'RIGS TO REEFS' PROGRAM

On Sept. 13, representatives from Texaco transferred ownership of their Eugene Island 313 A platforms to Louisiana, creating the state's 93rd and 94th artificial reefs. In addition, they presented a check for $480,400 to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Asst. Secretary John Roussel and Artificial Reef Program Coordinator Rick Kasprzak as a donation for the LDWF artificial reef program. The money represents half of the amount Texaco saved by not having to bring old oil rig platforms in Eugene Island 313 to shore for salvage, as required by federal law. The rigs are located at coordinates 28°15'26.9" x 91°45'33".

The LDWF 'Rigs to Reefs' program, created in 1986 by the Louisiana Fishing Enhancement Act, is a cooperative effort between LDWF, the oil and gas industry, various other state and federal agencies and gulf user groups. To date, 94 artificial reefs have been converted from offshore oil and gas platforms since the program's inception, providing the residents of Louisiana with enhanced fishing and diving opportunities.

"This is a win-win situation," said Texaco representative Paul Broussard. "The state obtains and is able to maintain a reef at no cost to the taxpayers, Texaco saves money on its abandonment costs, Louisiana residents have increased fishing and diving opportunities and most importantly, valuable fish habitat is maintained.

### CCA DONATES ELECTRONIC CHARTING SYSTEM TO LDWF

An electronic charting system donated by the Coastal Conservation Association of Louisiana to LDWF will help enforcement agents apprehend game law violators. The system was presented at the Oct. 5 Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries meeting.

The Si-Tex Prism 10 NT chart plotter, which has a value of about $3,000, will be mounted on the LDWF Delta Tide, a 47-foot offshore law enforcement patrol vessel. The charting system will provide agents on board the vessel with the exact nautical position. In addition, the system can locate land masses, spot underwater obstructions and provide other valuable information.

"Enforcing our state's fisheries laws is an important part of conservation. CCA Louisiana's 22,000 members and volunteers are pleased to assist our state agents in their efforts to ensure that our laws are respected by everyone," noted CCA LA executive director Jeff Angers. CCA LA is a non-profit organization of conservationists working to save the marine resources of Louisiana coastal waters.

### REVISED FINFISH REPORTING

Effective October 20, 2000, dealer reporting forms (trip tickets) are the sole reporting method for the commercial taking of black drum, mullet, pompano and spotted seatrout, according to LDWF program manager Randy Pausina. The individual monthly permit harvest reports for these species are no longer required. In addition, fishermen who hold traversing permits are no longer required to file monthly reports.

Those possessing a LDWF issued shark permit are still required by law to submit a monthly report recording the number, species and weight of sharks taken each trip. Those possessing traversing permits are required by law to notify LDWF four hours prior to leaving port to traverse or fish under the conditions of the permit and immediately upon returning from the permitted trip.

### RAPID RESPONSE BY ENFORCEMENT AGENTS HELPS MINIMIZE OIL SPILL

On Sept. 11, a rapid response by LDWF enforcement agents to an oil spill at Eloi Bay in St. Bernard Parish helped minimize environmental damage.

At about 10:30 a.m., LDWF Lt. Brian Clark was notified by a local seafood dock owner that commercial oyster fishermen had reported an oil spill. At the time the spill was reported, several oyster boats were working in the area. Clark immediately notified the National Oil Spill Response Center along with several local oyster docks and informed them of the problem, requesting that they notify area oyster fishermen and remain vigilant for contaminated oysters. Notification was also made to the Department of Health and Hospitals which controls oyster harvest areas for water quality and health reasons.

Clark, Sr. Agent Desi Fulmer and Sr. Agent Gary Pierce went to the affected area, backtracked the spill and determined the source. The agents notified Tex-Oil/Jeff Woods workers on the scene, who used containment booms to initiate a cleanup. The remaining cleanup operation was supervised by the U.S. Coast Guard and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

### CALDWELL SHOOTING RANGE OPENS

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, in conjunction with the Caldwell Rifle Range Shooting Club and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recently cut the ribbon at a newly constructed shooting range in Caldwell Parish near Columbia. LDWF Hunter Education supervisor Bud Carpenter and Caldwell Rifle Range Shooting Club President J.V. Crain presided over the opening of the five-stand sporting clay shooting range.

LDWF has constructed five public shooting ranges statewide.

## BREAUX ACT TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY

U.S. Senator John Breaux joined Lafitte residents, state and federal representative and Jefferson Parish officials October 20 to dedicate the Barataria Bay Waterway West Bank Protection project and celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, commonly known as the Breaux Act.

The Bank Protection project, which consists of nearly 16,000 feet of rock embankment along the west side of Barataria Bay Waterway, will benefit over 2,200 acres of coastal wetlands. The Breaux Act project was a join effort of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson Parish and local landowners Madison Land Company, Webb-Milling and Burlington Resources.

**Commemorating the Breaux Act ten year anniversary with Sen. Breaux (center) are (left to right) Col. Thomas Julich, Corp of Engineers; Dr. Len Bahr, Governor's Office; Jean Lafitte Mayor Tim Kerner; Donald Gohmert,USDA; DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell, Richard Hartman,NOAA; Marnie Winter, Jefferson Parish; and David Fruge, US Fish and Wildlife Service.**

## LOUISIANA'S NATIONAL HUNTING AND FISHING DAY FILLED WITH PEOPLE, FUN AND FOOD

Louisiana's annual National Hunting and Fishing Day, presented by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, was held on Sept. 23 at four locations throughout the state. In Baton Rouge, the event took place at the Waddill Refuge and Outdoor Education Center which boasted a turnout of approximately 2,400 people. The Monroe event hosted 3,200 folks, while Minden had a crowd of about 1,300 and the Alexandria area had 100 visitors. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hosted a crowd of about 2,000 at the Tensas Wildlife Refuge in Tallulah. Hunting and fishing traditions were showcased at the family-oriented events.

Hands-on exercises such as canoeing, shooting, fishing, archery and duck and goose calling and demonstrations of falconry, fly casting and retrieving were enjoyed by many.

### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication title: Louisiana Conservationist
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11. Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none.
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F.Total free distribution *(sum of 15d and 15e)* none

G.Total distribution *(sum of 15c and 15f)*: 29,400

H.Copies not distributed:

1. office use, leftovers, spoiled 1,000

2. return from news agentsnone

I.Total *(sum of 15g, 15h(1) and 15h(2)* 30,000

Percent paid and/or requested circulation: 100

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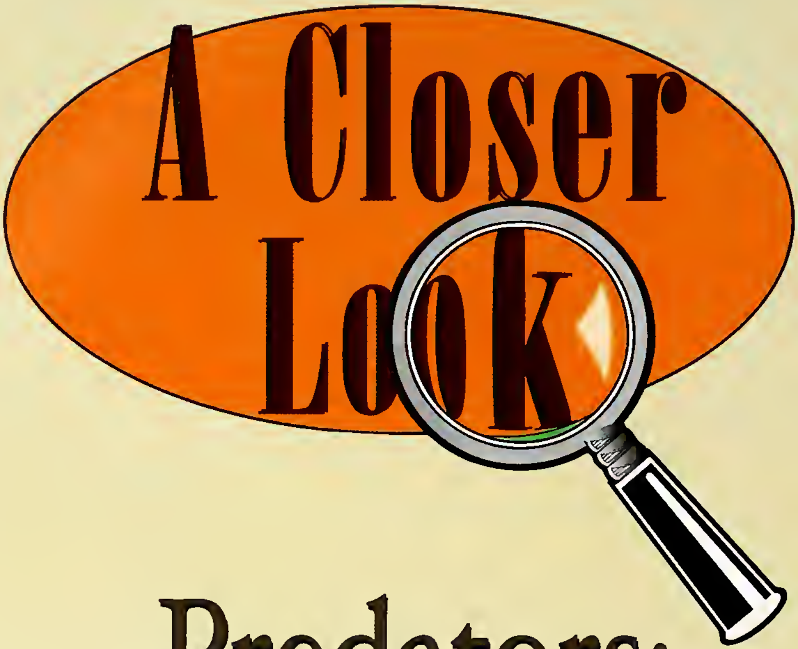
Percent paid and/or requested circulation: 100

16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the Nov/Dec 2000 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and title of editor: Janice Collins,Editor

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions *(including fines and imprisonment)* and/or civil sanctions *(including multiple damages and civil penalties)*.



# Predators: Rethinking our View

### BY FRED KIMMEL

The subject of predation can be one of the most controversial topics in the conservation arena. Few things can ignite a heated debate faster than a discussion about predators. The popular view of predators ranges from one which demands virtual extirpation to one which advocates total protection. In truth, predators are not ruthless killers that will annihilate game populations, nor are they benign creatures that prey only upon the sick and weak. Like most things, the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

During the past few years, increased attention has been paid to the role of predators and their effects on wildlife. In particular, predators such as raccoons, foxes, coyotes, skunks, and bobcats have received close scrutiny. Populations of these mammalian predators have increased over the last decade, due in large part, to reduced trapping activity associated with declining fur prices. Avian predators such as hawks and owls have also become more abundant in the last 30 years. Researchers have been investigating the effects of predators on quail, wild turkeys, deer, and ducks. To no one's surprise, these studies have demonstrated that predators sometimes take a lot of game animals and destroy nests. However, the impact of predation on the overall prey population is not well understood. From a practical standpoint, even if predation has a negative impact, there is little that can be done to directly alleviate it over a large geographic area. Localized predator reduction programs might have some impact, but they must be conducted within the confines of existing laws and they are time consuming, expensive and the effects are temporary.

Wildlife populations are largely determined by the quality and quantity of habitat. Most game animals have a high reproductive potential which allows them to compensate for predation losses. However, good habitat is necessary for them to take advantage of that potential. Weather also plays a role, but even favorable weather cannot make up for poor habitat. Abundant high quality cover for nesting, fawning, or brood rearing can help reduce predation during the reproductive period when animals are most vulnerable. Abundant and strategically located escape cover will help game animals avoid predators. Food should be available near cover so that animals do not have to venture far from escape cover.

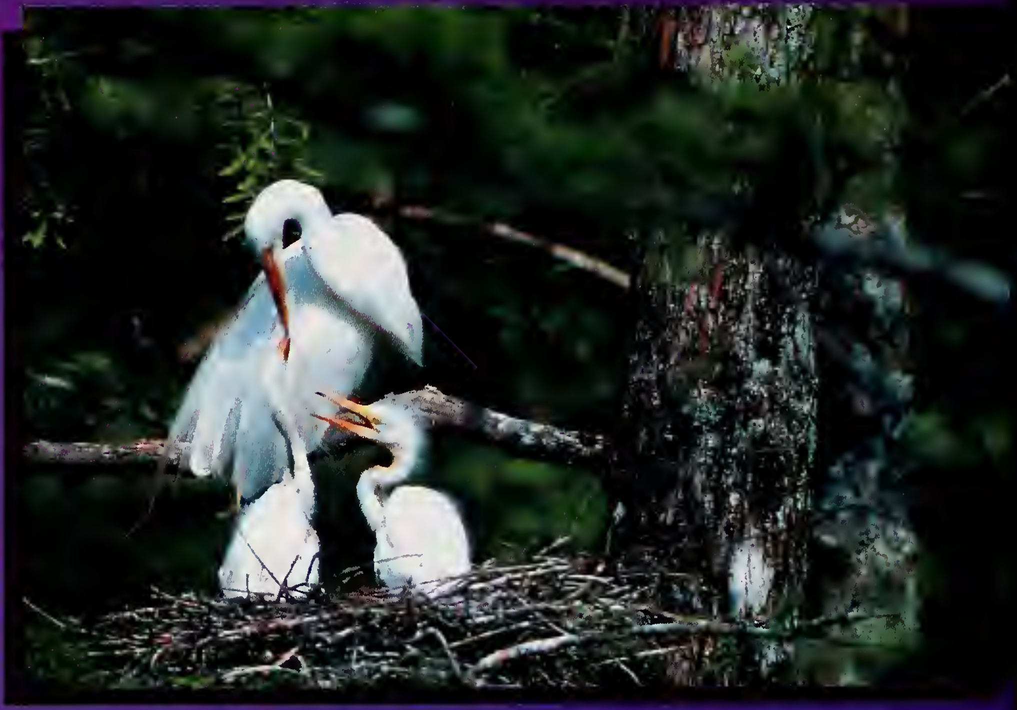
There are numerous examples of how game populations respond to habitat and weather. One classic example is that of the North American duck population. After several years of drought in the prairie nesting region, waterfowl numbers were at record lows during the 1980's and early 1990's. During this time, predators were receiving part of the blame for low duck numbers. However, once adequate precipitation returned and the habitat recovered, waterfowl numbers hit record highs. In the midwestern U.S., pheasant populations exploded when new habitat was created by the Conservation Reserve Program in the late 1980's and 1990's. There are similar examples in Louisiana. Even though populations of coyotes, bobcats and raccoons are generally thought to be high, deer and wild turkey populations have grown in most areas with favorable habitat. Bobwhite quail have not fared as well, but bobwhite habitat has almost universally deteriorated across the state.

It is important to remember that game animals have lived with predators for thousands of years. They have developed mechanisms that have enabled them to survive in the presence of predators. Ironically, it is these very adaptations that make game animals so sought by hunters. For instance, what makes wild turkey hunting so challenging? It is the keen eyesight and cautious nature of the gobbler. Deer are prized because their highly evolved sense of smell and inherent wariness. Bobwhite quail are among the most popular game birds because of their explosive flight upon being flushed. All these characteristics — keen eyesight, sense of smell, wariness, and rapid flight are adaptations game animals have made to avoid being eaten by predators. If not for predators, deer would probably be as elusive as cows, wild turkeys would be as challenging to hunt as their domestic brethren, and quail would fly like chickens!

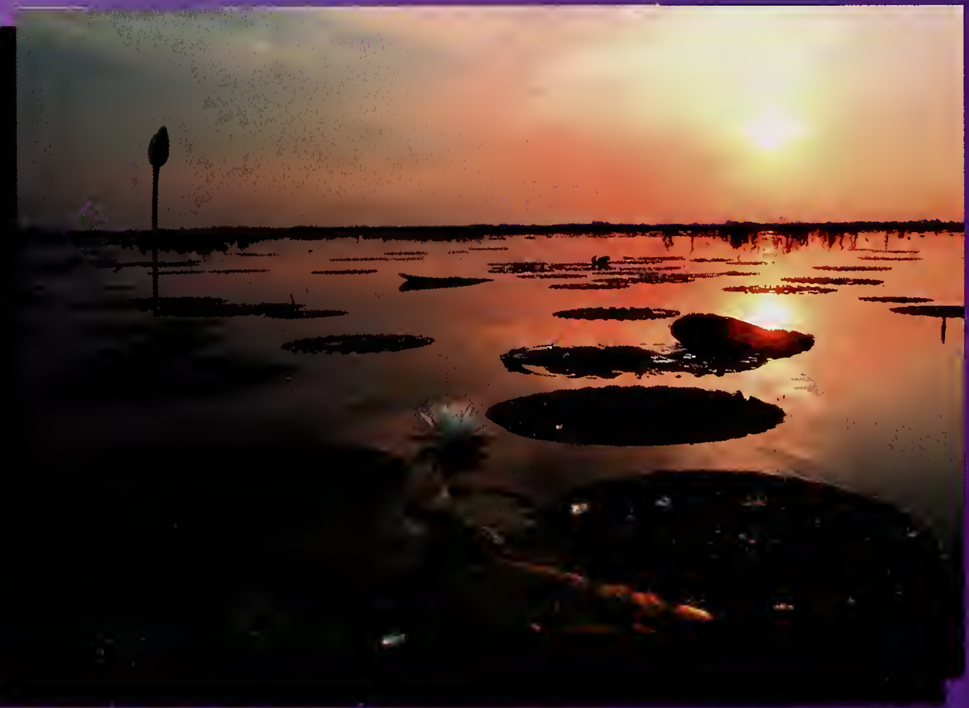
Next time we find ourselves blaming predators for a lack of game, we should first consider the habitat and take a critical look to determine what may be lacking. Upon doing so, we can use our resources to achieve a lasting effect by addressing habitat deficiencies. Perhaps then we can even enjoy watching a hawk hunt from its perch or appreciate the opportunity to observe a bobcat hunting along the edge of a field. These predators are integral parts of a system that has caused our game animals to evolve into the challenging prey that we hunters, predators ourselves, value so highly.

*Fred Kimmel is the LDWF Wildlife Division Upland Game Study Leader.*

# Photography Showcase

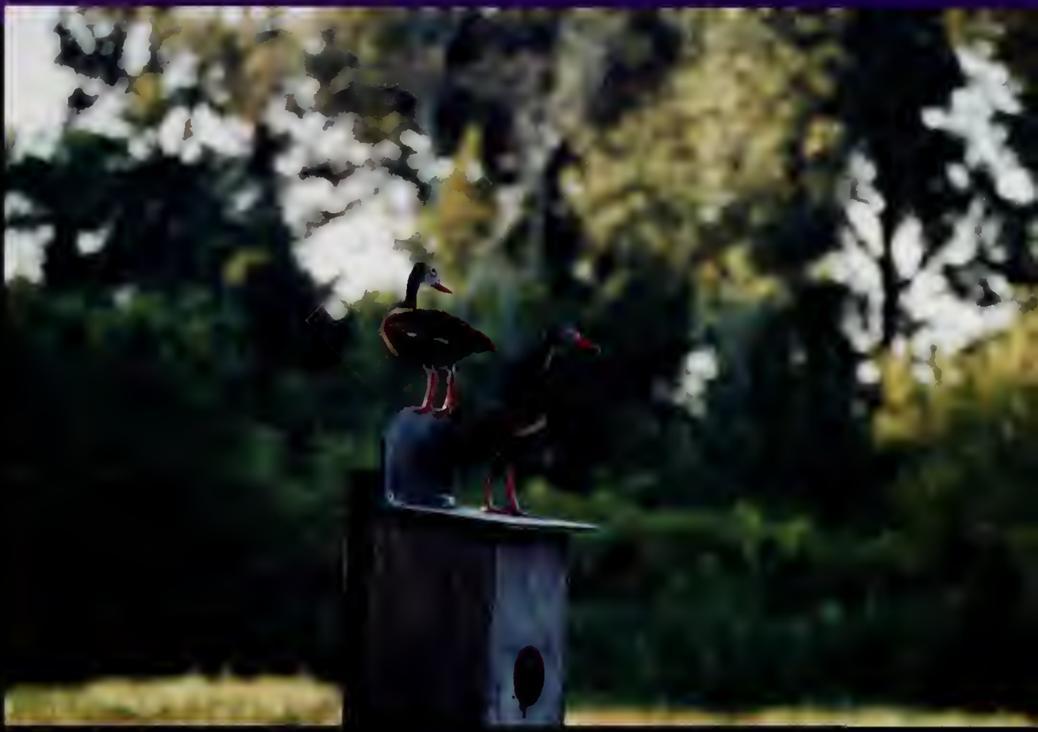


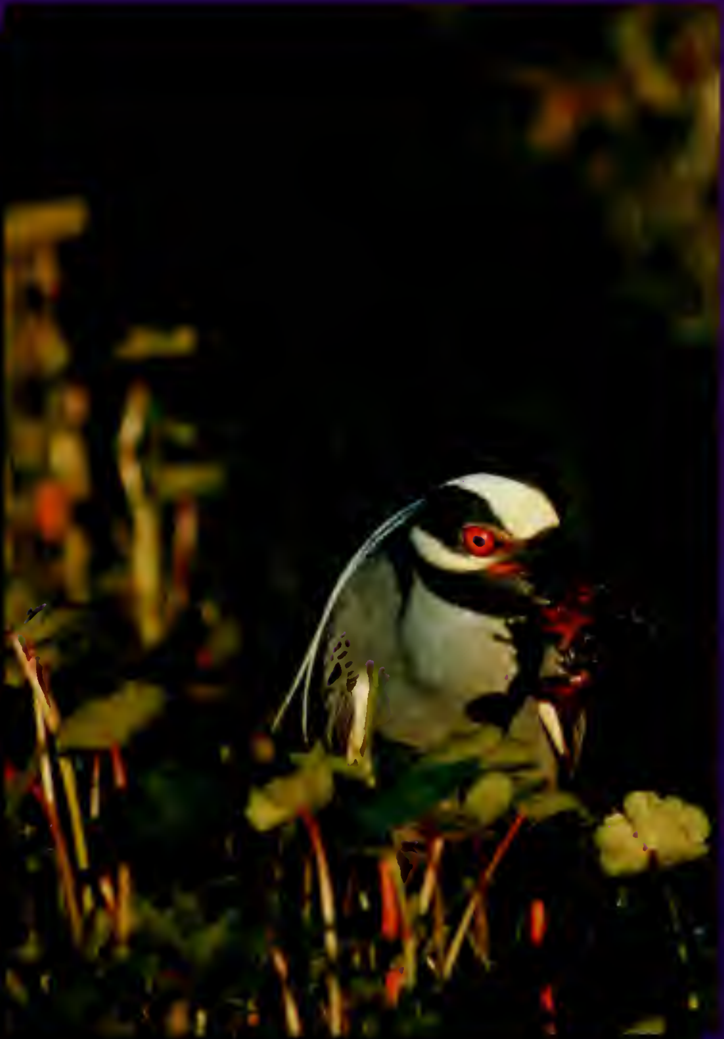
***Louisiana Species: Great Egret at Lake Martin***
**Photo by Francis Todd Baldwin**



***Louisiana Species: Lotus Bloom and Lily at Sunrise, Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge***
**Photo by Larry W. Ward Baton Rouge**

*Louisiana Species: Black -Bellied Whistling Duck on Bayou Teche*
**Photo by**
**James & Rita Vining**
**Garden City**





*Louisiana Species: Yellow Crowned Night Heron at Lake Martin*
**Photo by**
**Charlie Hohorst Sr.**
**Lafayette**

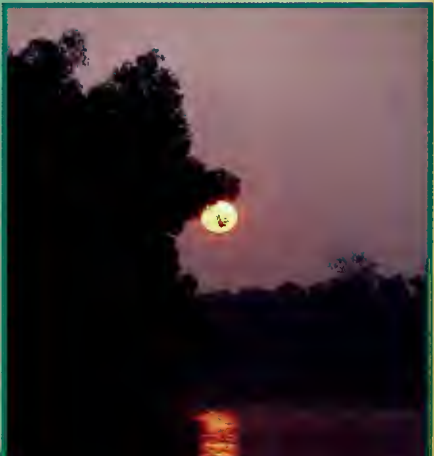
# Photography Showcase

Introducing a new addition to the *Louisiana Conservationist - the Photography Showcase*. This new section will display photographs submitted by our readers. One photograph from each category will be selected by our staff and showcased in each issue. *This is not a contest* but a selection of photographs that show originality, uniqueness and creativity. Selected photographers will receive a *Louisiana Conservationist* one-year subscription gift certificate which can be used to start a new subscription, extend an existing one or given as a gift.

## GUIDELINES

*All entries not following the guidelines will be returned unused.*

1. Anyone who can operate a camera can enter. *Wildlife and Fisheries employees and immediate family members are not eligible.*
2. Black and white, color transparencies and color prints are acceptable. All prints must have an accompanying negative. Do not cut the negative — send the entire strip.
3. Prints must be mounted on sturdy poster or matt board.
4. Name, address, phone number and age must be included with or written on each entry. Unlabeled entries will be returned unused.
5. Include a description and location of each photograph. Specify appropriate category.
6. Only first time published photographs should be submitted.



## DEADLINES

January 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, Sept. 1
All photographs will be returned.

## CATEGORIES

A. Natural Habitats: scenic shots of Louisiana. These may or may not include wildlife or people.

B. Louisiana species: native species of Louisiana. This includes plants and animals.

C. People in Nature: People involved in outdoor activities other than hunting and fishing.

D. Hunting & Fishing: People enjoying Louisiana's oldest outdoor sports.

**Mail submissions to Louisiana Conservationist Showcase, Third Floor, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

# C'est Bon!

y
hef Philippe Parola

### Trout Turban with Caper Sauce

**6 trout filets**
**2 quarts of water**
**1/2 cup white wine**
**1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
**salt to taste**

**For sauce**
**2 oz. butter**
**2 Tbsp. capers**
**2 tbsp. white wine**
**1/2 cut whipping cream**
**Tony's to taste**

Bring water, wine and lemon juice to boil. Add salt to taste. Roll up the trout filets in a turban shape, secure with a toothpick, then place trout filet in boiling water. Reduce heat to simmer. Cook for 10 minutes.

For sauce, brown butter in a skillet, add capers, saute lightly. Add white wine and reduce for a few minutes, then add cream until coating consistency. Season with Tony's.

Serves six.

### Venison Casserole

**2 lbs. diced, deboned lean venison meat (from back leg)**
**4 diced carrots**
**2 diced onions**
**1 diced celery branch**
**1 Tsp. flour**
**2 bay leaves**
**Tony's to taste**
**1/4 cup vegetable oil**
**1/2 cup red wine**
**2 cups water**

In a stew pot heat up the vegetable oil, then add the diced venison with all the diced vegetables. Stir until light brown, then add flour. Stir well until the flour is well mixed. Add wine and water, bayleaves and Tony's to taste. Cook slowly over medium heat for about one hour or until the venison is tender depending on the age of the animal. Serve over dirty rice.

### Pumpkin Flan with Meringe

**For Flan**
**1 cup sugar**
**1/4 lb. butter**
**1/3 cup all purpose flour**
**1/3 cup water**
**6 eggs**
**3 cups solid-pack pumpkins**
**15 oz. cream of coconut**
**14 oz. sweetened condensed milk**
**12 oz. evaporated milk**

**For Meringue**
**4 egg whites**
**1 cup sugar**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Make caramel with sugar and line 12 ramekins or one 13X9X2" glass baking dish and allow to cool. Melt butter and cool. Mix the rest of the ingredients well and add to ramekins. Bake in a water bath for one hour or until set. Leave oven on.

*Meringue*

Beat whites until they hold soft peaks. Add sugar and beat until stiff, glossy peaks are reached. Spread over custard and bake five minutes or until golden. Let cool, then chill for four hours.

### Chocolate Mousse á la Boxill

**1 quart cold whipping cream**
**1/4 cup of molasses**
**1/2 cup chocolate syrup**
**1/4 cup sugar**

Mix cream with sugar, then whip at high speed until firm. Add molasses and mix slowly and add chocolate syrup. Mix well and serve chilled

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